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"Truth Is One, Men Call It By Various Names." —RIG VEDA

VEDANTA QUARTERLY

Message of the East

VOLUME XXXVIII 1949 NUMBER 1

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Unity and Universality

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COMING EVENTS

VEDANTA CENTRE, 420 Beacon St., Boston, Mass.
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Gayatri Devi in charge
Class: Tues. 8 P.M.

ANANDA-ASHRAMA, La Crescenta, California
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AN IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

It is with regret we announce the change in price of the subscription of THE MESSAGE OF THE EAST. Due to the increasing cost of publication, it has become imperative. Beginning with this issue, the yearly subscription will be $3.00 and single copies 75c. Those who have already sent in their subscription for 1949, kindly mail the balance to The Vedanta Centre, 420 Beacon Street, Boston 15, Massachusetts, or to the Ananda Ashrama, Box 577, LaCrescenta, California.

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PACIFIC SCHOOL OF RELIGION

Message of the East

"And behold the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the East."
—*Ezekiel*

"Light shall come again from the East."
—*Tyndall*

VOL. XXXVIII 1949 No. 1

IMMORTALITY

From the Apocrypha

The ungodly said within themselves, reasoning not aright:
Short and sorrowful is our life,
And there is no healing when a man cometh to his end.
Neither was any man known to return from the grave.
Because by mere chance were we born,
And hereafter we shall be as though we had never been:
For the breath of our nostrils is smoke,
And our reason is a spark, kindled by the beating of our heart,
Which being extinguished, the body shall be turned into ashes;
And the spirit shall be dispersed as thin air;
And our life shall pass away as the traces of a cloud.
Thus reasoned they, and were led astray;
For their own ignorance hath blinded them.

FOR GOD CREATED MAN TO BE IMMORTAL,
AND MADE HIM AN IMAGE OF HIS OWN ETERNITY.
IN THE EYES OF THE FOOLISH THEY SEEM TO DIE,
AND THEIR DEPARTURE IS ACCOUNTED TO BE MISERY,
AND THEIR JOURNEYING FROM US TO BE THEIR RUIN.
BUT THEY ARE IN PEACE:
FOR THE SOULS OF THE RIGHTEOUS ARE IN THE HAND OF GOD
AND THERE SHALL NO EVIL TOUCH THEM.
THEIR REWARD IS IN THE LORD,
AND THE CARE OF THEM WITH THE MOST HIGH.

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UNIVERSAL MESSAGE

One must accept everything: God with form and God without form. While meditating in the Kali temple I noticed Ramani, a prostitute. I said, "Mother, I see that Thou art in that form too." Therefore I say one must accept everything. One does not know when or how God will reveal Himself. —*Sri Ramakrishna*

And I—I am detached, free, ageless;
I am become a denizen of the infinite;
I wander where the eternities are.
—*Hugh Robert Orr*

I do not recognize any enemy which is human, for no human being can be my enemy. Whoever he is, whatever color he is, however mistaken he may be in what he believes, he is my friend, not my enemy, for he is not different from myself. My quarrel is not with him, but with that in him which I seek to destroy in myself first. —*William Saroyan*

I was born to love and not to hate. —*Sophocles*

It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness.
—*Old Chinese Proverb*

I press God's lamp close to my heart;
Its splendor, soon or late, will pierce
The gloom: I shall emerge some day.
—*Robert Browning*

By extinguishing the fire of pain man may find his comfort, his period of slumber, which is the period of stagnant time, an imprisoned present; but by mastering this fire he lights his lamp of wisdom which gives illumination to the endless future. —*Rabindranath Tagore*

Who knoweth if to die be but to live,
And that called life by mortals be but death?
—*Euripides*

UNITY AND UNIVERSALITY

By Swami Paramananda

(An Address delivered by the Swami at the Vedanta Centre, Boston, July 4th, 1920.)

Every religion can be divided into two parts: one part which our parents hand down to us at birth, so to speak, and the other part which comes to us through our own inward striving and experience.

We are all brought up, it is true, with certain inherited creeds and conceptions, but religion itself we cannot inherit. It is all very well to belong to the church our fathers and forefathers belonged to, but there must be something more, something vital that we evolve from within.

Religion is very ethereal; it is the highest thing in life, the most uniting; but at the same time it is a potent cause for lack of unity and dissension. The more violent forms of fanaticism have been due to religion, that is, religion in its organized forms, while the most beneficent concepts of life, coming to us both from the East and from the West, also are of a religious origin, although they have arisen out of man's spiritual realization and not from his acceptance of a creed.

The superficial acceptance of any religion, whether it be Christianity, Vedic philosophy or Buddhism, has never saved any soul or nation. The only way we may truly belong to a great faith is to get into the heart of it, and there is no one who has access to that heart through the creed or the letter. The only way we can enter is through our own heart, through our own understanding. As Christ said, we have to be born again, born in that faith which unfolds from within and is not the result of mere hearsay.

We cannot believe in God just because God commands it or because any Bible tells us to do so. It is when we come

face to face with Spirit that we believe in Spirit; then there is no one who can thwart our faith. It is this which gives us the basis for our spiritual life. It is this which makes our heart full of sweetness, gentleness, mellowness. We no longer can have ill feeling towards anyone because that great Vision has removed from us all harshness and thoughts of enmity.

A saintly character, one who has realized the divinity of the Spirit, becomes like a flower. He gives his blessing, his love, his fragrance to the one who truly seeks it, without any regard as to where that person was born, of what family or cult or nation.

The Bibles of the world, almost without exception, point to one cosmic, infinite, all-abiding Deity. Some give Him one name and some another, but whatever the name the concept is the same — the Perfect and Only One.

Now if that is the basis of all religions there should be nothing but unity and universal acceptance everywhere, and if religion thus unites people, why should they fight? Rather they should protect and love one another. Unfortunately, the actual result proves the contrary. We do not find that all who claim to love God are loving their brothers, although there are many who are devout and are willing to fight for their cause. A person who is sincere, reverent, pious, how can that person be unkind to another merely because that other does not uphold the same creed or express his idea of God in the same language? It proves to us that there are these two conceptions of which I have spoken—the secular conception and the one that comes from the realization of God in the heart.

How can there be more than one Almighty Being? You say, "My God is infinite!" If your God is infinite, He includes everything. Infinity has no boundary line. That

means all the universe is contained in Him. When you realize this, there can be no more condemnation or intolerance; nothing but love can flow from your heart. This is practical religion. The strange thing is that man can repeat these things and then go out and create a little narrow circle outside of which, so he teaches, there is no real salvation for the soul.

Here is a tremendous problem which must be solved if we are ever to know peace or real brotherhood. All sincere and intelligent people are seeking to solve it. Men everywhere are striving to discover a way to unify human beings, to bring them together in harmony. In fact today the passion of the world is for unity.

There is one thing, however, that people often overlook in their zeal: and that is the world's need for diversity; they fail to take account of differences. For it is not by destroying all the varying forms and all the existing varieties that we are going to bring about a unified way of living; it is rather by finding a basis upon which we can unite all diversities, all temperaments and all tendencies.

In the early Vedic conception this thought was given a very direct and simple expression: "That which exists — the Supreme — is One without a second. Devotees and seers of Truth know that One by many names, according to their inner convictions."

That is the motto of the Indo-Aryan civilization, and that ideal formed its cornerstone, not only in regard to its spiritual evolution, but also in relation to its social and political life.

God is one universal Spirit. I cannot conceive of anything more inclusive. And India has proved her belief in it. When people came to her from other lands, bringing other religions, what did she do? Did she ask them to

abandon their faiths and partake of the Hindu religion? No, she did not; she left them free. They came and settled there; they evolved their own philosophies; they built their own temples without opposition or interference. The Hindus did not believe, nor do they now believe, in converting people from one faith to another. If they did, they would be going contrary to their principle: "God is One."

There are reformers, imbued with one idea, who in trying to enforce that idea, have destroyed many beautiful things. It is true that a good surgeon when treating a sick person may sometimes have to remove some portion of the body that is poisoned or contaminated. There is that side to consider and in our efforts toward betterment we cannot afford to overlook it; but let us not forget that the work of healing is never destructive.

This tremendous zeal to unite — what good will it do if it degenerates into a new form of narrowness? "Let us have one religion," you say, "and let every one come and belong to that. Those who feel they cannot do so, have no right to exist!" That is not universality, it is fanaticism.

Through the Vedic tradition we are told that there must be many religions, suited to different temperaments, but that all religions lead to only one God. He who reaches that Godhead sees no diversity. He who attains that spiritual height of oneness, God becomes a reality to him. He sees himself within all beings and all beings within himself; knowing unity, he has no more hatred, and love flows from his heart.

For a man who stands in the valley, there is a great difference between a blade of grass and a tree, but when he reaches the mountain-top everything blends in one mass of beautiful green. The same way it is with us. So long as we remain on the outskirts, on the lower levels of spiritual

philosophy, we dispute and discuss and never find unity; but when we rise to the heights we attain it simply and spontaneously. It depends entirely on our spiritual evolution.

Not by belonging to a church, a creed or a society are we ever going to realize Great Truth. No one has a monopoly on that, although some may want you to believe that they have and that it is needful for you to conform to their concept and give up everything else. The ancient Indo-Aryan sages, however, tell us never to disturb anyone in his faith. The moment you raise your voice and say that your religion is a little better than someone else's religion, you are striking a discordant note, you are belittling the God you are trying to uphold. When a man destroys another's faith he is not following his ideal. The only way we can follow our ideal is through living, and that requires no other instrument than the one God has given us — infinite love.

We are taught: Love your neighbor; forgive everyone; do unto others as you would have them do unto you. But what does this mean? If you are a Christian you are supposed to have absolute faith in these things. Then practise them and bring out their import. If you do, people will follow you; they will draw inspiration from your life, you will have countless numbers of converts and not only Christian converts; you will make converts for the realization of the world Ideal, the infinite Ideal. God is not confined to any creed. "Alike am I to all beings, hated or beloved there is none to Me; but those who come to Me with openness of heart and devotion, they are in Me and I am in them." That is one of the ancient sayings of Sri Krishna. Those who come with the right spirit, they enter into the rhythm of universal life and they find themselves in God, and God dwells in their heart. In everything they do,

everything they say, everything they express, they carry the import of infinite life. It all depends on what you feel and what you have acquired through your consciousness.

Clinging to dogma will not give you the secret of spiritual evolution. That is impossible. I do not mean that we should not have the utmost respect for all the great Bibles of the world. I bow before every one of them because they contain the key to spiritual existence; but mere superstition and superficial belief will not bring you your liberation or any progress in life.

It is by silently and patiently carrying out your ideal in your life and living that you attain what at first seems unattainable. This means great courage, for the world will criticize you. Emerson says: Be glad to be criticized. All great men have been criticized. Everyone must be criticized and condemned, and the further you rise on the spiritual heights the more you must expect this condemnation, because the ordinary world is vulgar in regard to spiritual things. It laughs; it mocks; it ridicules!

There are thousands of people who call themselves followers of Christ. Yet among those who accept His philosophy how many have the courage to live up to it? It is by our life and not through a ready acceptance by the world that our faith is justified, and that is where Vedic philosophy lays its emphasis.

Man realizes the truth that God is infinite and all-abiding first of all in his heart, and that becomes the universal centre in his consciousness. He proves it through his life, his whole being, and it becomes a dynamic factor in his evolution. Spirituality is not written in any book; it could not be. It is too ethereal, too fine, too subtle. Those who become truly religious, they give up all quarrel and dispute. They do not try through argument to settle the superiority

of one religion over another. It is wrong for us to try to convince others before we have convinced ourselves. It is dangerous to try to lead others before having ourselves gained the goal.

India has plenty of learned men and philosophers, but no one there is considered to be a spiritual teacher unless he has the vision. A great distinction is made between these two types of mind. To the learned you go to be taught philosophy or any branch of science, but if you want to know about Deity or truths pertaining to God, then you seek a lowly saint who perhaps does not know how to speak very well, or does not speak at all, but who has something within him that flows out through his life and conduct. To sit near a man of this type is like sitting near a light and feeling the radiance from it. Spirituality must be like that or it cannot be productive.

Most of us are anxious to achieve some such aim. We think of these things and exert ourselves in order to attain them; but the Ultimate can be realized only in the highest tranquillity of the human heart. At the same time it is needful to realize it, at least partially, before we can become tranquil. We can argue and declare that we have found the Truth, but that is not going to convince anyone. When we have truly found It, the whole tone that we take will speak for us. Emerson says that a man is known by his tone. It is not what we are saying that reveals what we are, but the whole aspect of our being. If you are a lover, you will impress everyone with your love, and if you have hateful thoughts, no matter what kind of a smile you put on your lips, they will betray you — especially when you least expect it.

We cannot deceive anyone; but we can fool ourselves many times. We can talk big things, such as "God is in-

finite and He loves all," but our words will carry no import. We have first to find our connection with Deity. We have first to be convinced that we are a spark of that Divine Fire. As soon as we have become convinced of that, instead of growing eloquent with the knowledge that we are part of the Divine, our voice grows silent and our heart becomes full of the magic of love. Love is magic. Even an unpolished, uncouth, harsh, uncultured person is transformed when coming in contact with that which is vast and unbounded; real love takes possession of his soul.

Herein lies the solution of the spiritual problem. It is not by talking about infinite love that we realize it. First it is needful to realize the Fatherhood of God. For until we do, how can we realize the brotherhood of man? Until we have found a common Deity how shall we know that we are brothers? That is the first step. As soon as we have found that we are part of that Infinite, no matter whether we call It Infinite Truth, or Father in Heaven, or Divine Mother, it is very simple to feel our connection with all living things.

"Love your neighbor as yourself." We find the interpretation of this in Vedic philosophy. A disciple came to the master and said, "Why is it wrong to hate anyone or hurt anyone?" "My son," the master replied, "Do you not know that you are your brother and your neighbor? Whenever you hurt another you hurt yourself more: you impede your own evolution."

We are all of us aware that whenever we do wrong, even though nobody may have seen us, our consciousness becomes shrunken, limited, confused. Why? Because that is the Law. Whenever we touch the petty and small, our vision becomes smaller, and as we expand our consciousness and come to see the glory of Infinity, this finite life becomes

a direct channel for the expression of the Infinite and through it we are able to realize universality and the unity of the great universe.

Different religions, like many rivers, lead to the same goal. We know that rivers large and small rise from different sources, but that their ultimate goal is the ocean. Same way it is with all the different paths men follow; they all ultimately lead to Truth.

Unfortunately we often fail to realize this so cannot express it in our actions. A man with philosophic trend of mind, for instance, does not see any use in ritualism or in the devotional element of spiritual practice. Therefore he condemns the one who follows this path. His mind is not adapted to that sort of religious approach and so he destroys the only vehicle that other has for his salvation, and can give him nothing in return. Reformers often are guilty of this.

True spiritual idealism must take in everyone and everything from the highest to the lowest. There can be no condemnation. Truth is infinite and growth is a matter of evolution. Little children do not understand as much as grown-up people, but children as they go through the process of evolution make great gain. So with us in our spiritual life. Therefore we must not disturb anyone. Everything has its purpose. When we do not understand something, let us admit that it is beyond us. Let us say: "I do not see it that way, but I will not interfere with your vision of it." Are you all wise? If you are, then you can interfere.

As our vision deepens, as our feeling grows, our inward spiritual feeling, we become more and more tolerant. You never find a truly great man who quarrels and fights and is fanatic and hot-headed. It is only the small man, the man who has not sounded the deeper note in his life, who wants

to settle everything by word of mouth. But such a man does not go very far, nor does he bring any peace or satisfaction.

The other type, however, who realizes the depths of his being, he lives, and through his life proves his philosophy. Since God is infinite, he partakes of that infinite quality. He shows infinite love, not only toward people who believe as he does and are closely connected with him, but even toward those who have no connection, even there his love extends. Naturally he becomes a direct channel for spiritual expression, and that is the consciousness we should all try to attain in our spiritual venture.

There is no religion which can claim that it is the best or the highest. All religions remind us again and again not to be vulgar, small and selfish, and not to destroy the beautiful things of life. But no amount of reminding, or of reading, will save the situation for us, unless we absorb and manifest the greater virtues in our life and living.

There is no one who is especially equipped to do this. Each man is equally a child of God. One who realizes this, one who actually partakes of infinitude, makes at the same time his link with humanity. He no longer shrinks from anyone; he no longer hates anyone. Love permeates his whole being and he finds that through his own realization he has attained that ideal of all mankind: unity of life and universality.

Spirit of all spirits, Soul of all souls, Mind of all mind, Life of all life, Substance of all form, this transcendent Absolute is no complete opposite of all we are, but, on the contrary, the originating and illuminating Absolute of all the principles and powers of our and the world's being and nature.

—*Sri Aurobindo*

GOING AHEAD

By Srimati Gayatri Devi

(An Address given at the Vedanta Centre, Boston, Sunday, January 2, 1949)

Our world's great philosophers and spiritual teachers often speak in parables. They translate an abstract idea into concrete form by using graphic illustration. For instance, they speak of life as being a school, a training school, wherein we enter, and wherefrom we acquire knowledge, applying which we later show marks of growth and development. Again, they compare life with a field in which we sow seeds, seeds of action, being impelled by the good and evil tendencies within us. They say that out of this field we gather the harvest of good and evil affecting our destiny. Again they portray life as a battlefield whereupon we find ourselves at war. This description of the battlefield is a familiar one to the students of Vedanta. In the Bhagavad Gita the battlefield forms the background against which Sri Krishna, the teacher, instructs his disciple to fight and decide between the issue of good and evil. Again, life is pictured as a journey, or a pilgrimage. We begin at a certain point, walk through passages of change, gathering varied and multiple experiences, and eventually arrive at a certain goal.

Whenever we think of life as a journey, the question arises in our mind: Whither are we going? This of course is the perennial philosophic enquiry which is involved in the other two questions: Whence and why? Wherefrom do we come, why do we come and where are we going? These inquiries can be answered only by the philosophers because they are the ones who have been seeking an explanation and meaning from life.

Some men would have us believe that life has no particular purpose. If that is true, it would have neither any order, nor system. The philsophers would not have us accept any such

view as this which claims that some accident of nature has given us life and by the same process of chance happening, we come to an end. No, they would have us know that there is precision, order, system and significance in life. Whether we know it or not, whether we are conscious of it or not, we are definitely serving a purpose as well as moving toward a particular goal.

For all of us the idea of progress, the thought of advancement has tremendous appeal. It satisfies us intellectually. No matter what our interpretation of progress is, philosophic or materialistic, we like to feel that we are making progress, "we are getting somewhere." This desire of going somewhere is innate. We are glad that we are not like trees, stationary, rooted in the ground. Of course, we must remember that even the trees move upward; only, they stay in one particular location, while for other living creatures there is freedom of locomotion. As for us, the human beings, there is not only the power of free physical movement but the ever-expanding motion of mind and consciousness.

Only a few among us would deny to themselves that there is a feeling of anticipation when we set out upon a journey. Children express it. They are always so eager to go somewhere, either to walk or to run, or to ride on vehicles. I myself have known a wonderful exhilaration while on an automobile trip. A feeling of hope and expectancy is quickened the moment we start on a journey. It is not altogether a physical or emotional sensation rather a spiritual feeling reflecting upon our senses. Because we have the innate aspiration for going forward we are able to experience it on the sense plane.

This feeling of release from a stationary post is involved in our spiritual progress. I am inclined to think that men misinform us when they say that we can only go so far and no

farther. In other words, we are to follow the laws of nature, move on her own given course to a certain point, then there is no more advancement for us.

Let us look at life as it is divided according to Nature's laws. We begin as an embryo, go through birth, infancy, childhood, youth, manhood on to mature years, then comes the declining period followed by the culmination, death. We have learned to think of the latter part of our life as something about to close, something drawing to an end. As if there were no more steps to take, no farther to go. This attitude is ours because we judge and measure life purely by the physical. Because we as human beings take our abode in the body, and because body, the instrument, is subject to laws of birth, subsistence, growth, decline, decay and death, we think that that which is within us is also subject to the laws of the body. We assume that it too stops growing; instead, it settles into an immobile state and eventually disintegrates and dies.

Spiritually speaking, this point of view is altogether incorrect. Our body, having its final state of growth, may not progress farther; but its dweller, the Spirit, has unlimited scope for going forward. An unbounded passage lies before it. One never thinks of it in the terms of boundary or limitation, so vast is its capacity for expansion.

There is a certain restlessness within us which proves the limitlessness of our being. Frequently after we have achieved a definite objective, we are still dissatisfied, as if a voice from within tells us we must go farther, there is more to seek, to find, to acquire. Every spiritual aspirant has experienced this wholesome dissatisfaction. He is promised the high goal, whereat others have arrived by following the right path. Strangely, even after arriving there, he often remains somewhat unaware of what he has achieved. The inner drive con-

tinues to push him forward. Without it he would settle down and become crystallized.

We can learn a great deal from intelligent observation of the working of Nature. In her work-shop, perfection in creation is followed by dissolution. The same rule seems to control man-made political, social and ideological systems. For instance, we hear that in some of the small countries in Europe most of the social and economic problems have been eliminated by invention of perfect systems. What is the result of such achievement? National complacency, smugness and self-satisfaction are likely to follow, depriving the people of their desire to bring about further change or improvement. In such a state of affairs, growth becomes impossible for nations. If we could understand our individual lives in this light, we would not be afraid of change, neither fear difficulties, nor shrink away from obstacles.

There is something we must all recognize, that to spur a spirit onward, it must be allowed to meet with opposing forces. Where there is no friction or opposition, life becomes stagnant, motionless and thus unprogressive. Swami Vivekananda used to say, "No opposition, no success!" Do we think that we can really grow without opposition or obstacles? We must have them. They are absolutely necessary for our growth. They help our spirit to go onward and forward. Therefore, we must always remember that to advance through life does not mean walking on a smooth well-paved road, free of difficulty, danger, or dark shadows. Our passage through life is not perfect. If we foolishly expect it to be so, we are going to retard our progress. There are times when we shall move freely, altogether unhindered, then there will come periods of testing, trial and tribulation. These, my friends, the great men say, are the sign-posts of our pathway. They mark the definite stage in our development.

How wonderful it would be if we could move through life, advancing! If instead of feeling hopeless or desperate, as we live year after year, an awareness of touching something bigger and better could impel us, our life would fill with richness at every step of the way. None of us would have a sense of futility; instead, an exaltation.

I never believed that to grow in years is to grow old. In this respect I probably have become an American, for most Americans do not carry age consciousness. Only they are inclined to emphasize it from the physical standpoint. Preservation of the body is very important for all of us, but it is not everything. To cling to youth when it has passed, is to deny our mature years their expression of beauty and fulness. The advanced age too has its own mark of dignity and depth. How stupid we human beings are to forget this! We become unreasonably afraid and by our very fear, cling to the passing; thus we push back what is awaiting us. This attitude definitely prevents our growth.

We need to remember that always we are going ahead, without declining or growing old, or losing what we value. How can we have this conviction except through our knowledge of the spiritual? Nothing else can make us aware of it. Neither our vanities, nor our love of the physical, nor our attachment to the passing can assure us. The glowing consciousness that life cannot be exhausted by living nor measured by time is worth all our seeking. We can partake of life in the fullest, yet there is still more to have. It is this attitude toward life which keeps one young. When we possess it we look upon childhood, youth, maturity and old age with equal regard because we have learned to think in the terms of Spirit.

The Spirit is ageless, timeless, deathless, perennially alive. It does not rest, cannot slumber, will not be thwarted. It is

ever going on. It must move on and on. Its aim is to discover itself in complete comprehension of its own being. At this point only, its journey ends. This goal has been described as at-one-ment, or transcendental Consciousness. When we reach It we are no longer earth-bound, flesh-bound, sense-bound creatures. We cease to be crying and struggling mortals. We become free, majestic and blissful.

Is it not exalting to be able to think upon such thoughts even for a passing moment? Do not think that I am tempting you with imaginary ideas or exciting speculation. Truth is always Truth, whether we accept it or not, whether we have the courage to seek it or not. Either you live by Truth which is going to set you free, or you live like bondsmen.

Human progress consists in going forward in search of Truth. If you desire It, no one can hinder you. You may choose to spend yourself in seeking lesser things. That is your personal affair. No one can force us to go forward. Sometimes we stand still. Often when we live unconsciously, unmindful of life's purpose, we do not make use of our opportunities. Steeped in darkness and delusion, we remain where we are. We are going neither forward nor backward. In our ignorance we create fetters and tie ourselves hand and foot. Then we struggle and suffer and cannot move onward. But when we awake spiritually and realize what we are doing, we break the chains and free ourselves. We cannot remain bound forever. Our love of Truth sets us free and encourages us to move higher and higher.

There is one thought we must ever keep in the foreground of our mind. That is, we are superior to all sentient beings. We are greater than plants, animals, sub-humans and even the angelic beings. Please do not ask at this point for a philosophic explanation of this statement. Man has been regarded as the foremost in all creation. It is man who is en-

dowed with that extraordinary machine called brain. His is the power of action, volition and choice. A tree can only grow according to Nature's direction. A human being can help in his own growth, because he is conscious of his inherent divine potentiality.

Here is something we must never forget. We can reduce ourselves to an animalistic state or raise ourselves to the highest standard of Self-expression. We are never to say: "Oh well, let me grow slowly like a tree, without any effort on my part." We are not supposed to take this casual and careless attitude. Rather, we must make every effort to better ourselves. Have you ever known of any accomplishment without endeavor? If you really wish to go ahead, you must make conscious effort to live vitally, overcoming difficulties and problems and keeping your gaze fixed on the chosen goal.

Shall we remember this as we begin the New Year? Shall we adopt a philosophy so founded on common sense and spiritual in its implication that it will stir high motives and aspirations within our heart, and inspire us to utilize every moment that lies ahead? We should want to make use of our opportunities. We shall even learn to consider the obstacles and difficulties as opportunities. If we are moved by this spirit we are bound to go ahead in leaps and bounds. All the lethargy, deficiency and diffidence from which we suffer will leave us. We will be led by that powerful drive within us, to outgrow our confining shackles and experience the freedom and joy of spiritual expansion.

Why should we be content as pygmies? Why should we remain little human beings when our calling is to be spiritual giants? Expansion is possible only when our consciousness transcends the limitations of our personality, and when we decide that such a gain is worth our struggles. After all, we are all struggling after that which means most to us.

Financially we want to go ahead; therefore we work for it. Desiring perfect health we strive for it. We are eager for material success for which we spare ourselves no trouble. Similarly, if we aspire for spiritual growth, for a bigger and clearer mind, a deeper heart, a larger vision, we must put forth diligent effort. We must be willing to go through all tests and ordeals if we consider such achievement worth having. The sum total of all experiences for a human being should be wisdom, deepened consciousness, a broader personality. We ought to be able to say of ourselves, "I am different this year than last year. I am stronger, steadier, more tranquil, more certain of the real things, and freer from trivial desires." This to my mind would be advancement. This would imply that we have really gone ahead.

If you have a few gray hairs or wrinkles, do not be troubled. They are unimportant. Try to remember body is the reflector of Spirit. It is generally known that a spiritually advanced person can capture eternal youth. The Spirit shines with the radiance of beauty which has no age. You must not allow your enthusiasm to wane, optimism to decline, your ardor to slacken. If the humdrum existence of every day weighs you down you must do your best to hold your head high above non-essentials. These are the practical suggestions you can use in your own daily living. Enthusiasm and interest we must have to make living worthwhile. Laugh, play, work, endure, learn the lessons at hand, bearing in mind that you are being carried forward by your very adaptability to be in harmonious relationship with life itself.

Let us realize that as human beings we are most fortunate, having been given all the facilities—faculties of body, mind, heart and Spirit. We are the co-partners of our Maker. Do I sound bold or audacious? It is good to think in these terms.

We think of ourselves as nothing and we become nothing. We think of sharing in the Almighty's power, His glory, life and propensity, and we are It. Even now as we reflect these thoughts, we feel their impact upon our being. We are lifted to a high level of consciousness wherefrom come light and strength.

Let us not be unthinking as we enter upon the new year. Let the old passage of life be brightened by a new zeal. No matter what happens we can never afford to give up our ardor for living. Swami Paramananda used to say, after he had lived and worked in this country for more than twenty-five years, "I have spent a quarter of a century here, I feel I have done little. I would like to render greater service in the next quarter century." It is inspiring to observe the unusual personalities, especially those who are without attachment and bondage. How they live! They give the impression of possessing greater zest for living than the ordinary earthbound souls. Their passion for service is limitless. We are to look to such things as an example.

India gave the world a very remarkable system called "Four Stages of Life," used in olden days to a successful end. The first part of a person's life, youth, was not merely for seeking pleasure of the senses. It was for gathering knowledge of Truth in preparation for a worthy role. The following stage was spent in full utilization of the man's power, gift and capacity through service to his family, society or country. The third section, the middle age, entailed gradual withdrawal from the world in cultivation of the Truth learned in youth. The fourth was given wholly in practice of inwardness, meditation and other spiritual exercises to bring about higher development. Thus the declining years became the most profitable, bringing the man a serene contentment and peace which is desired by all mortals.

In conclusion, may I say, go ahead. When you find conditions are interfering with your desire for going ahead, do not be disturbed or deceived. You are not really being hindered, only tried and tested. You are proving your strength and stamina. When the trial passes you will find yourself a step ahead. Look upon life in proper light regarding all experiences as stepping-stones toward your spiritual advancement. Then all will be well. You will grow with life, it will exalt you, bring you deep and abiding happiness, and above all, you will begin to feel an inner peace. In time you will carry this peace under all circumstances. You will no longer be troubled, confused, tormented or disturbed. You will be the knowing Spirit moving knowingly toward the Source of knowledge, truth, being and bliss. This ever remains our Goal. We would not want to aim at a lesser ideal.

ENCHANTED GLASS

By Amy Requa Russell

There is a pool whose limpid waters shine
As lustered surface of enchanted glass,
Where butterflies with sea-blue wings as fine
As any gauze becloud the edging grass.
There langorous lilies, risen mild as cream,
Have thickened in immaculate array,
To be the bland enamels of a dream,
But never stark nor common shapes of day.
And yet I wish some storm would blow a cloud,
Deliver thunder, cast a bolt or two,
Or pour thin, slanted torrents to enshroud
These tinted virtues in a darker hue,
And for no reason, save I like a plain,
Bare landscape, and the honest sound of rain.

SAYINGS OF MEISTER ECKHART

What is truth? Truth is something so noble that if God could turn aside from it, I could keep to the truth and let God go.

If it is true that God became man, it is also true that man became God . . . and so . . . you haven't got to borrow from God, for he is your own and therefore, whatever you get, you get from yourself. Before God, work that does not come from your inmost self is dead . . . If a man's work is to live, it must come from the depths of him—not from alien sources outside himself—but from within.

No person in this life may reach the point at which he can be excused from outward service. Even if he is given to a life of contemplation, still he cannot refrain from going out and taking an active part in life. Even a person who has nothing at all may still be generous for his will to give, another may have great wealth and not be generous because he gives nothing; so no man may have virtues without using them as time and occasion require. Thus, those who are given to the life of contemplation and avoid activities deceive themselves and are on the wrong track. I say that the contemplative person should indeed avoid even the thought of deeds to be done during the period of his contemplation but afterwards he should get busy, for no one can or should engage in contemplation all the time, for active life is to be a respite from contemplation.

If God should give my soul all he ever made or might make, apart from himself, and giving it, he stayed away even by as much as a hairbreadth, my soul would not be satisfied, for I would not be blessed.

Love cannot put up with either fear or pain, and so, to grow in love is to diminish fear, and when one has become a perfect lover, fear has gone out of him altogether.

A TALK WITH GREAT SWAMIJI

From "Conversations and Dialogues"

It is the month of November. Swamiji [Swami Vivekananda] is now much engaged in the study and discussion of Sanskrit scriptures. . . .

On this day it seemed as if the goddess of learning had manifested herself on his tongue. With the disciple he fluently talked for about two hours at a stretch in exceedingly melodious Sanskrit.

After the disciple had copied the hymn, Swamiji said, "You see, as I write immersed in thought, grammatical slips sometimes occur; therefore I ask you all to look over them."

Disciple.—Sir, those are not slips, but the license of genius.

Swamiji.—You may say so; but why will other people assent to that? The other day I wrote an essay on "What is Hinduism," and some amongst you even are complaining that it is written in very stiff Bengali. I think, like all other things language and thought also become lifeless and monotonous in course of time. Such a state seems to have happened now in this country. On the advent of Sri Ramakrishna, however, a new current has set in, in thought and language. Everything has now to be recast in new moulds. Everything has to be propagated with the stamp of new genius. . . . Everything requires to be changed a little according to place, time and civilisation. . . . As your physique has been rendered languid by living on a dietary of boiled rice and *dal,* similar is the case with your language. In food, in modes of life, in thought and in language, energy has to be infused. With the infusion of vitality all round and the circulation of blood in all arteries and veins, one should feel the throbbing of new life in everything — then only will the people of this land be able to survive the present

terrible struggle for existence; otherwise, the country and the race will vanish in the enveloping shadows of death at no distant date.

Disciple.—Sir, the constitution of the people of this country has been moulded in a peculiar way through long ages. Is it possible to change that within a short time?

Swamiji.—If you have known the old ways to be wrong, then why don't you, as I say, learn to live in a better way? By your example ten other people will follow suit, and by theirs another fifty people will learn. By this process in course of time the new idea will awaken in the hearts of the whole race. But even if after understanding, you do not act accordingly, I shall know that you are wise in words only — but practically you are fools.

Disciple.—Your words, Sir, infuse great courage, enthusiasm, energy and strength into the heart.

Swamiji.—By degrees the heart has to be strengthened. If one man is made, it equals the result of a hundred thousand lectures. Making the mind and the lips at one, the ideas have to be practised in life. This is what Sri Ramakrishna meant by "allowing no theft in the chamber of thought." You have to be practical in all spheres of work. The whole country has been ruined by masses of theories. He who is the true son of Sri Ramakrishna, will manifest the practical side of religious ideas and will set to work with one-pointed devotion without paying heed to the prattling of men or of society. Haven't you heard of the couplet of Tulsidas: "The elephant walks the market-place and a thousand curs bark at him, so the Sadhus have no ill-feeling if worldly people slander them." — You have to walk in this way. No count should be taken of the words of people. If one has to pay heed to their praise or blame, no great work can be accomplished in this life. "The Atman is not

to be gained by the weak." If there is no strength in body and mind, the Atman cannot be realised. First you have to build the body by good nutritious food — then only will the mind be strong. The mind is but the subtle part of the body. You must retain great strength in your mind and words. "I am low," "I am low," repeating these ideas in the mind man belittles and degrades himself. Therefore the Shastras say, "He who thinks himself free, free he becomes; he who thinks himself bound, bound he remains." This popular saying is true; as one thinks, so one becomes. He alone who is always awake to the idea of freedom, becomes free; he who thinks he is bound, endures life after life in the state of bondage. It is a fact. This truth holds good both in spiritual and temporal matters. Those who are always downhearted and dispirited in this life, can do no work; from life to life they come and go wailing and moaning. "The earth is enjoyed by heroes" — this is the unfailing truth. Be a hero, always say, "I have no fear." Tell this to everybody— "Have no fear." Fear is death, fear is sin, fear is hell, fear is unrighteousness, fear is wrong life. All the negative thoughts and ideas that are in this world have proceeded from this evil spirit of fear. This fear alone has kept the Sun, Air, and Death, in their respective places and functions, allowing none to escape from its bounds. Therefore the Sruti says, "Through fear of this fire burns, the sun heats, through fear Indra and Vayu are carrying on their functions, and Death stalks upon this earth." When the gods Indra, Chandra, Vayu, Varuna will attain to fearlessness, then will they be one with the Brahman, and all this phantasm of the world will vanish. Therefore I say, "Be fearless! be fearless!"

Swamiji, in saying these words, appeared in the eyes of the disciple like the very embodiment of fearlessness, and

he thought, "How in his presence even the fear of death leaves one and vanishes into nothingness!"

Swamiji continued: In this embodied existence, you will be tossed again and again on the waves of happiness and misery, prosperity and adversity — but know them all to be of momentary duration. Never care for them. "I am the birthless, the deathless Atman, whose nature is Intelligence" — implanting this idea firmly in your heart, you should pass the days of your life. "I have no birth, no death, I am the Atman untouched by anything" — lose yourself completely in this idea. If you can once become one with this idea, then in the hour of sorrow and tribulation, it will rise of itself in your mind, and you will not have to strive with difficulty to bring it up. The other day, I was a guest of Babu Priyanath Mukherjee at Baidyanath. There I had such a spell of asthma that I felt like dying. But from within, with every breath arose the deep-toned sound, "I am He!" "I am He!" Resting on the pillow, I was waiting for the vital breath to depart, and observing all the time that from within was being heard the sound of "I am He!" "I am He!" I could hear all along, "The Brahman, the One without a second, alone exists, nothing manifold exists in the world."

The disciple struck with amazement said, "Sir, talking with you and listening to your realisations, I feel no necessity for the study of scriptures."

Swamiji.—No! Scriptures have to be studied also. For the attainment of Jnana, study of scriptures is essential. I shall soon open classes in the Math for them. The Vedas, Upanishads, the Gita and Bhagavata should be studied in the classes and I shall teach the Panini Ashtadhyayi.

Disciple.—Have you studied the Ashtadhyayi of Panini?

Swamiji.—When I was in Jeypore, I met a great gram-

marian and felt a desire to study Sanskrit grammar with him. Although he was a great scholar in that branch, he had not much aptitude for teaching. He explained to me the commentary on the first aphorism for three days continuously, still I could not grasp a bit of it. On the fourth day the teacher got annoyed and said, "Swamiji, I could not make you understand the meaning of the first aphorism even in three days; I fear, you will not be much benefited by my teaching." Hearing these words a great self-reproach came over me. Putting food and sleep aside I set myself to study the commentary on the first aphorism independently. Within three hours the sense of the commentary stood explained before me as clearly as anything; then going to my teacher I gave him the sense of the whole commentary. My teacher hearing me, said, "How could you gather the sense so excellently within three hours, which I failed to explain to you in three days?" After that, every day I began to read chapter after chapter, with the greatest ease. Through concentration of mind everything can be accomplished — even mountains can be crushed to atoms.

Disciple.—Sir, everything is wonderful about you.

Swamiji—There is nothing wonderful in this universe. Ignorance constitutes the only darkness, which covers all things and makes them look mysterious. When everything is lighted by Knowledge, the sense of mystery vanishes from the face of things. Even such an inscrutable thing as Maya, which brings the most impossible things to pass, disappears. Know Him, think of Him, by knowing whom everything else is known. And when that Atman is realised, the purport of all scriptures will be perceived as clearly as a fruit on the palm of one's hand. The Rishis of old attained realisation, and must we fail? We are also men. What has happened once in the life of one individual must, through

proper endeavor, be realised in the life of others. History repeats itself. This Atman is the same in all, there is only a difference of manifestation in different individuals. Try to manifest this Atman and you will see your intellect penetrating into all subjects. The intellect of one who has not realised the Atman is one-sided, whereas the genius of the knower of Atman is all-embracing. With the manifestation of the Atman you will find that science, philosophy and everything will be easily mastered. Proclaim the glory of the Atman with the roar of a lion, and impart fearlessness unto all beings by saying, "Arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached."

AN EASTER CROCUS

By Pauline Creesy

You brighten up the corner
And make my heart feel gay.
Oh! little yellow crocus,
This must be Easter Day!

Just yesterday when I looked there
I saw a tiny star,
Today you shine much brighter,
A crown of gold you are!

When you lay there beneath the sod,
Where life is cold and dim,
Did doubts and fears perplex you,
Did the way seem hard to win?

O modest little crocus,
So new and sweet within,
You proved to me on Easter
Life over death can win!

DIFFERING WAYS TO GOD

By Maximus of Tyre

(Greek philosopher, second century)

God himself, the father and fashioner of all that is, older than the sun or the sky, greater than time and eternity and all the flow of being, is unnameable by any law-giver, unutterable by any voice, not to be seen by any eye. But we, being unable to apprehend his essence, use the help of sounds and names and pictures, of beaten gold and ivory and silver, of plants and rivers, mountain-peaks and torrents, yearning for the knowledge of him, and in our weakness naming all that is beautiful in this world after his nature — just as happens to earthly lovers. To them the most beautiful sight will be the actual lineaments of the beloved, but for remembrance' sake they will be happy in the sight of a lyre, a little spear, a chair, perhaps, or a running-ground, or anything in the world that wakens the memory of the beloved.

Why should I further examine and pass judgment about images? Let men know what is divine; let them know: that is all. If a Greek is stirred to the remembrance of God by the art of Phidias, an Egyptian by paying worship to animals, another man by a river, another by fire — I have no anger for their divergences; only let them know, let them love, let them remember.

And if you would know God be not therefore a solver of riddles.

Rather look about you and you shall see Him playing with your children. . . .

You shall see Him walking in the cloud, stretching His arms in the lightning and descending in rain.

You shall see Him smiling in flowers, then rising and waving His hands in trees.

—*Kahlil Gibran*

STUDIES IN THE BHAGAVAD-GITA

From Class Talks by Sister Devamata

Realization is not an ultimate thing. This is the thought which I would especially impress upon your minds tonight. It is not something that comes at the very end of the road, as it were, and for which we have had to labor through, perhaps, lifetimes without reward. Realization is a constant factor in our lives, and is coming upon us gradually at every moment.

Some of you no doubt remember the Buffalo World's Fair. Its most important feature, you will recall, was the way it was lighted. First came a soft glimmer of light, which increased, yet so gradually that no one could measure the increase until the final full light was attained. It was a wonderful thing to see, and it symbolized the experience we all go through in our spiritual striving.

None of us knows just when the first flash of spiritual realization comes, but actually from the time we are born until we die we are constantly in the process of realizing. Every time we look, every time we listen, every time we touch or taste or smell, every time we think, we are realizing something on the outside of us; that is, some new area of the world has become real to us. That is what realization means.

How often we go up and touch an object and say, "I did not realize it was so cold — or so hot — or so soft." The actual state or character of that thing in relation to our senses has become suddenly real to us. It is the same with ideas. Thus when we suddenly see clearly something which we never saw before, we are apt to think that we have had a sudden vision, an illumination, but the truth is, it has come as the gradual result of this daily imperceptible growth in realization. So it is with all our experiences. Some phase of

reality is opening up for us all the time, and for every living being.

That which differentiates the spiritually-minded man from the worldly man is his attitude toward reality. The worldly man is making real to himself that which is unreal. In other words, all his experiences are carrying him out to external things, which because he can taste them, or smell them, or hear them, or see them, appear real to him. Thus he is making real what in the last analysis is not real.

You may ask: "How do we make anything real?" By fixing our thought on it. For instance, as we are wandering along we see what appears to us a shadow, but as we look at it, it seems to begin to move and we think it is approaching us, and finally we are convinced that it is something alive that is threatening our safety. We have given it reality through allowing our thought to dwell upon it.

There are certain qualities pertaining to reality. The greatest of these is the quality of unalterableness. For instance, a real diamond and a counterfeit or false diamond put side by side might in the beginning deceive an ordinary jeweler; but after they are worn for some months or years, the unreal stone will lose its lustre, while the true one remains the same. It is that way also with people: a person who is genuinely sincere and dependable, his friendship is unchanging; it stands the test of time, while someone else, perhaps with a great deal of personal charm and surface brilliancy, proves after a while to be just like the paste diamond.

In this world, however, even that which seems most abiding only partakes of the real. For who has ever found anything that has an absolutely unchangeable quality? The most precious things and the most dependable ebb and flow, grow light and dark. Therefore, from the standpoint of ultimate reality, this world cannot be real, and if it is seeming real to

us it is because we are making it so by lending it the reality of our own being. The very moment we understand this and turn our mind toward God, Divine things begin to acquire definite form and actuality, till, little by little, the ordinary associations of the world seem wholly shadowlike in comparison. When this happens, we may know we are beginning to realize Divinity, and if we are able to gain even the least little glimpse of that Divine, the effulgence we have sensed will be just the same at the end of a lifetime as it was the day that we had the vision.

Therefore, That alone is the real, and the people who seek It and recognize It carry with them that unalterable quality. They move along the line of reality, and therefore when they believe a thing to be real, it is real. The man, however, who is seeking to make real what is not real will some day have a terrible awakening, for he has built his house on the sands, believing them to be of solid rock.

We never think a thought of God that some realization does not awaken within us. The very moment we turn our mind to God, take the Lord's Name, or reach out towards the Ideal, we open ourselves to an influx of Godly inspiration. We never sit down to meditate or to read a holy book, or even to give passing attention to higher things, that we do not experience some new reality. When we go to a place and hear about God or some sacred subject, no matter how barren our heart may be or how little we may seem for the moment to respond, a new realization has entered our being. Like the gradual increase of light about which I spoke, however, it is so small that we cannot measure it; but if we follow its leading day by day, the final flash which comes, perhaps at the end of many months, will blaze forth with real brightness.

All this makes it apparent why it is essential in the spir-

itual life, never to break the line of practice. Suppose, for example, you set apart a certain hour, or certain hours, of the day for spiritual study or contemplation, and you go on for a week or even for two weeks with great enthusiasm and earnestness then it grows irksome to you, and you think, "What is the use of continuing when I feel this way?" and so you stop your practice. Actually what have you done? You have cut, as it were, that line of realization. It is just exactly as if you had turned the button and put out the light and then had to begin the gradual crescendo all over again. You have lost more time than you can realize, more than you can in any way appreciate.

The regularity and faithfulness of practice is more vital than the amount. In India when a disciple comes to a teacher, the very first thing he asks him is: "Are you free to carry on your practices? That is, free within as well as without. Have you so adjusted your values that this spiritual search is more vital to you than anything else, so that you will not let go of it?" They test you in that above all else. They know that if people come in a half-hearted way, they will get such a small result that it will not be worth while to instruct them.

Therefore, once you have taken up a practice of this sort, you should be very steadfast in it. "Never be weary in well doing." No matter how discouraged you may be at times, just say to yourself, "It is coming surely, steadily, unfailingly. I may not be able to tell just when the result will be perceptible, but something somewhere within me has known reality today."

This is what faith means. It means moving with perfect confidence even in the dark, never questioning nor doubting. If we can maintain this attitude of mind, we may be sure that we cannot be cheated of reaching realization even, it may be, in this life. The world is apt to draw us aside from our

purpose; that is true; but what exerts an even more powerful pull upon us than the world is that temptation to work for results.

I told you last week that there are three elements in our effort towards illumination. The first is activity or work; the second, growing out of this, is wisdom; and the third is renunciation. This does not mean that you must begin with a long period of Karma Yoga or union with God through work, then another long stretch of Jnana Yoga or union through wisdom, and then a final stretch consisting of renunciation. It is not in the least like that. Every time you act with purity of heart you gain wisdom. Renunciation is not an act at all: it is a reaction. One may say that wisdom is the direct result of pure-hearted action and that renunciation is a by-product. It comes of itself and can never be voluntary.

True renunciation is the inevitable outcome of wisdom. The very moment you have discriminated and known the real, the unreal drops off of itself. If a woman wears a jewel, believing it to be a real jewel, and then finds that it is made of paste, she does not want to wear it any more. To do so would make her feel cheap. Always when we discover that something we have cherished is unreal, the act of renunciation is spontaneous and automatic. Any other kind of renunciation has no power to endure. The renunciation that is the result of temporary disgust or disappointment is apt to cause a reaction back to the person or object you have renounced, in another form.

There are, as a matter of fact, only two kinds of activity for us to think about in the spiritual life: work which has its supreme culmination in service to the Ideal, and discrimination as to what is true service, which brings wisdom. Renunciation immediately follows of itself.

Do not be discouraged if after a little spiritual practice, few things seem to hold for you any real value. Do not feel that you are losing the joy of life or its richness. Let things go, and be glad to get rid of them. Possibly for a time your life may seem to be empty, but nature abhors a vacuum, and soon it will be filled again with what is far more real and of infinitely greater value.

In the Bhagavad-Gita, Sri Krishna makes it plain that one must detach oneself from results. If a man does not do so, he cannot work freely. Moreover, he limits the results he may be able to obtain, because very often the results he desires are far inferior to those which his action is capable of producing. The whole of his mind should go into his activity. That, however, is impossible if there is calculation, for calculation means that one-half of his mental effort must be diverted to that; therefore the result can be only a partial one. From the practical standpoint alone wholeness of effort is most important, since only in that way can one work with really high efficiency. Perfect balance of mind is also essential, and this necessitates keeping the mind calm. Strength lies in calmness. If you are fearful about results, there will be a constant teeter-totter in your thought, a constant swinging this way and that.

Stop thinking about what you yourself are going to get out of it all. Self-consciousness in the act must go, because that also divides the mind. The whole of your thought, as I have told you, must be centered in the action. But there must be more than that, for we find the Lord, Sri Krishna, telling us that we must work with understanding. What does this mean? It means that we must understand what is the ultimate end of all action, and here is where realization comes in.

The very moment you set out to act, you begin to move

toward some reality; therefore you must discriminate and decide what you want to make real to yourself in that action. You can, if you wish, make your own honor and glory real; although you will without doubt say that you are not interested in honor and glory. Are you not? The very fact that you expect recognition, gratitude, or an acknowledgment of your increased importance — as well as the disappointment you feel when you do not receive these — shows that it was glorification of yourself in some form or other that you were seeking. The greatest result that can come to us from any action, however, is not *getting* something, but *being* something. That is the highest possible return, and that is where understanding comes in. "What am I going to get out of this?" an ignorant man will say. "I don't want to get anything out of this," a wise man will remark, "I want to *be* something bigger and finer."

As we pour ever more enthusiasm into our work, our power of working increases, just as our skilfulness increases every time we put into an act our greatest possible skill. Being more skilful means that we have moved a little nearer perfection. For this reason an artist who really wishes to grow in his art, never paints a picture thinking how much he is going to make out of it. Instead, he is always thinking how he can express his ideal with ever greater perfection through his art.

We too should ask ourselves how we may become bigger, nobler, more spiritual through our every action. For it is not merely at the time of meditation that we gain in growth, but in everything that we do. The very way we walk down the street determines it. Some people when they walk seldom go straight, and this affects their consciousness. We learn by the way we hold ourselves, by the way we work, by the way we dress, by the very way we take off our clothes and

put them on the chair at night, by the way we leave our room and keep our belongings. All this may seem trivial, but in any act, however small, lie wonderful opportunities, for when we are conscious of doing even the least thing for a higher end, we immediately become more conscious of the end.

Everything is a part of the cosmic order. The very papers we lay on our desk count in the great total. That is what it means in the Bible when it says: He who is faithful in little things shall be made ruler over many. It is so easy to be careless in small matters and heroic in big ones. One should do even insignificant tasks with the idea that they represent a part of the great cosmic whole.

Feel yourself a channel for perfection; in every new endeavor become increasingly aware of God, that infinite Reality, then more of perfection will be able to flow through you and because it is flowing through you, you will become more closely united with the Perfect One. This leads naturally to freedom, to wisdom. The Lord says, "The wise, possessed with such understanding or knowledge, abandoning the fruits of action, become freed from the fetters of birth and reach that state which is beyond all evil."

Here we must consider another element which enters into the picture of our spiritual endeavor and which may disturb our evenness of mind. I refer to the matter of authority and tradition. We are, so many of us, bound by what we have always been taught or by what other people will say, so the Lord tells us to cross beyond the mire of delusion, for then alone we shall attain "indifference regarding things heard and yet to be heard."

One of the pitfalls we meet is that shrinking we feel from doing something different from others, and the fear that if we do so, we shall cause pain. When we reduce this to plain language, we shall see how absurd it is, that we must

be inefficient because if we are not, somebody is going to be hurt by our efficiency. The Lord warns us against this. We must not be concerned with what people may say, he tells us; we must have but one authority: "When thine intellect, tossed by the various opinions of the scriptures, becomes firmly established in the Self, then thou shalt attain Self-realization—union with God."

Over and over again, our old habits of religious thought and conviction come back to us. It is very difficult to free oneself entirely from early teaching and to find one's own religion and not merely accept a ready-made one. To go off the beaten track means a great deal of pain and distress, so we settle back and delay the day of our illumination; it may be for many lifetimes. We must throw off this fear and lethargy. It is one of the temptations along the way. Swami Vivekananda said, "Never take anything on hear-say." He also said, "It is very good to be born in a church but very bad to die in one."

Look about at the churches. Why do they often seem so little alive? Is it not because no one connected there is trying to prove anything for himself? Unless we work with ever growing understanding, not content to let the understanding of yesterday satisfy us today, we shall not increase in our wisdom and vision.

Do not differentiate one kind of work from another, but feel that every kind of activity represents the possibility of new realization. You may be sure that each day that you have acted thoughtfully that night will find you a little wiser. In the Bhagavad Gita, Arjuna naturally inquires, "How am I to know whether or not I am wiser? If I follow this path, by what can I measure my growth in wisdom?" I think this is a question we would all ask. What proof have we that we are growing wiser? Many around us think that

we are growing more foolish. If we are to throw away the desire for the legitimate results of our activity and expect only wisdom, then how are we to know that we are actually gaining wisdom? Arjuna demands definite information on this point. He asks, "How does a man of steady wisdom speak, how does he sit, how does he walk?" The Lord replies, "When a man is satisfied in the higher Self by the Self alone, when he has completely cast out all desires from the mind, then he is said to be of steady wisdom." Likewise we may know when we have attained this state of mind that we are becoming men of steady wisdom.

At the present time all our satisfaction and gratification is gained from the outside. The proof of this is that it requires a great act of will on our parts to spend a half hour alone with our own soul. When we sit down for meditation, we are engaged for fully half the time in checking impulses to rise and do something else. This shows that our real interest and satisfaction are in the external. We cannot keep our thought inward at all. Therefore if inwardness of mind is to be the sign of wisdom, and we find that we are not moving inward, it shows that we are moving outward and away from our ideal. We may not be thinking directly of results but nonetheless our mind is outward going.

In every thought one should turn inward to God. When you are dusting a chair, feel, "This is a prayer; I must not leave any part of it undusted any more than I would leave part of my prayer unsaid." When you deal with someone, feel that God is there in him. Always go to the inside of everything; try to reach the kernel, in your thought, in your action, then you may know that you are gradually advancing toward your inner Self.

Actually the only reason we do not turn to our higher Self more easily than to our lower self is because we do

not know It. We are bound to love some part of our self, because self-love in some form is the most deeply rooted element in our being. That which we identify ourselves with, we love. We shall have no trouble in loving our Soul once we know It, and we learn to know It by moving inward.

Do not allow yourself to imagine that this inward turning is going to be always difficult and never very pleasant. The sense that we are giving up everything that is nice for something that is painful or at least very doubtful, keeps us often from advancing; but as a matter of fact, the inward way is full of joy. It is because our life seems so incomplete and our heart so empty that we have all these desires. It is not because they have any inherent value. When we begin to know the higher Self and touch the spiritual plane, our heart is no longer empty; it grows so full and our life seems so rich that other things no longer attract us. Desires fall off of their own weight.

Give God and your Soul a chance. Now, perhaps, out of twenty-four hours you manage to squeeze fifteen minutes or, at the most, half an hour for higher thought or contemplation. If you are unable to give a longer time to regular meditation, then take the attitude of listening and waiting at the Lord's feet at little intervals throughout the day. If you do this, you will be amazed what a sense of richness and completeness will come to you, like a rain of Divine blessings.

God does not sell these blessings: He gives them away. All that He asks of us is that we open ourselves to receive them, and the way we open ourselves is by activity with understanding. He is waiting to shower His blessings upon us, and we go running hither and thither asking blessings of men and the world. It is what St. Paul meant when he said, "Do not do as men please, but as God pleases." That is, do

not seek gratification from the human plane; seek it on the Divine plane, because there we find the only satisfaction which endures.

A PEASANT-HEALER

By the Rev. G. J. Ferken

(This article under the name of "The Healing Work of Vignes" is republished from "The Nazarine.")

In the south of France and in the department of Gard, lived, during the second half of last century, in a little village of the Cevennes mountains, a peasant by the name of Vignes. He was a descendant of those Huguenots who suffered persecution during the religious wars brought on by the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes.

A Protestant of the old stock, he loved and read the Bible daily and lived up to it. With little or no education, he retained all his life the habit, the language and the kind of life of the mountaineer.

When still very young, he was deeply affected by a serious illness of his mother, for whom he had a profound veneration. Persuaded that only God could restore her to health, he earnestly entreated Him to spare her. His prayers were heard. From that day on he gave up all medicines. He surrendered himself entirely to God, whom he worshipped henceforth as the Great Physician of body and soul.

Convinced, with great humility, that he was endowed with the gift of healing, he consented to receive in his modest dwelling all such visitors who wished to be benefited by his religious experience and his power of intercession. His fame soon spread beyond his locality and his co-religionists, because of many wonderful cures, whether in his village or at a distance. He continued his work until his death in 1908, after he had reached the good old age of eighty-four.

The Roman Catholics of the mountains called him a "sorcerer." Howbeit they came to him when they were sick. He never accepted money for his cures. (A lady once offered him 10,000 francs; and when it came to him anonymously, he handed it to his pastor to be distributed among the poor.)

"The end of this servant of God," wrote a minister who knew him, "was modest as his life was." After a few days of sickness, Vignes slept his last sleep, and like the patriarchs of old, was gathered unto his people. His pastor, at the grave, retraced his long career, full of abnegation and devotion, and showed the Gospel of Jesus Christ as being the only source at which the departed had found the success of his mission.

Some fifiteen years previous to his death his reputation had passed the boundaries of his country, and in 1893 a company of ministers and laymen of the Reformed Church of Switzerland took the long journey to Vialas, the village of this old Huguenot faith-healer, not so much in search of recovery, though some went for that purpose, as for a close investigation of the nature of his wonderful cures.

We have before us a brochure in French, narrating in thirty-two pages, all that was seen and heard there — eight short chapters, each more interesting than the other, telling of their observations, investigations, conversations with Vignes, his answers, remarks, and mode of healing. How we wish it were translated and widely scattered! Until this can be done we shall briefly give a foretaste of that most interesting and fascinating brochure by a condensed résumé of what it contains.

Vignes is portrayed as a man somewhat resembling Martin Luther, minus his corpulency; short, and reserved, like most of the French peasants. He dressed simply, wearing the traditional blue blouse and wooden shoes. He was accustomed

to receive his visitors in a small room with one window. The furniture consisted of chairs ranged in line along the walls, an antiquated sideboard, and in a corner the old-fashioned pendulum clock. On the wall there was only one picture, representing Daniel in the lion's den.

As he entered the room with a grave yet animated expression on his face, he would greet his visitors thus:

"My friends, why did you come here? I cannot do anything for you. God is as much in your home as He is here. Trust Him implicitly and you shall be healed. Look not for things where they are not. Yield yourselves to God. Believe and ye shall see the Glory of God."

On other occasions he would say, "You have come from far to seek for something that I cannot give you. God possesses everything. Your presence here testifies that you do not trust Him, otherwise, you would not be here. When a child is sick he does not run after strangers. He goes in all confidence to his father and mother. *God is to us, through Jesus Christ, more than Father and Mother, since by Jesus Christ, we are members of the household, joint heirs of the glory of Christ and of his promises: Ask and ye shall receive.*"

His method of healing was most peculiar. He laid hands on no one, nor prayed publicly, but would speak with great authority and, as it were, *command*. Often, after inquiring as to the nature of the disease, he would say that the cure *had already taken place,* and it happened to be so, indeed.

He would recite the 103rd Psalm, especially verses 3 and 4, and say, "Everything is here; if you have understood me you are healed. If you are not healed, you have understood nothing."

"What struck me most," said one of the investigating committee, "was the calm, the serenity, the precision with which he spoke. He never prays in the presence of the sick,

but in spite of this, one feels as if he were in the Presence of God."

To some Swiss pastors present he said, "*You preach but do not believe. You must practise the Gospel. Heal the sick yourselves! God never deceives. We can rely on His promises. He does not want us to suffer. He is the best of Fathers.*"

His ordinary way of healing the sick was done on this wise: "*In the Name of Jesus,* I tell you that you *are* healed."

When he was asked by a minister how he was brought to his ministry of healing, he answered, pointedly, "By this book." He was then holding the big Bible in his hands and pointed to me John XIV. v. 12-14.

"I told him," writes the minister, "that I also wanted nothing but what was substantiated by the Word of God."

"Yes," he answered, "but one must observe the Word of God. I am a peasant and have had time to acquire faith by the Holy Scripture, but you are a preacher and you have not yet acquired it."

"But have you not more than others, a peculiar gift to do such marvels?"

"I do no marvels. I only do the will of God. We are too poor to work miracles."

"Where is your secret?"

"In the Gospel. Seek it and you shall find it."

We cannot bring this sketch to a close without quoting what one of those who went to examine these "marvels" wrote about Vignes: "We have neither seen nor heard anything there that might inspire distrust. Let others think of him what they please; in our eyes he is grand, grand in his simplicity, grand in his humility, grand in his disinterestedness, grand above all in his faith.

"He realizes what he recommends to all — *consecration*

and the gift of one's self to God. The will of God, and obedience to this will, are his only thoughts.

"His logic is very simple: 'Give thyself fully to God! If thou doest it, God shall be thy Father. If God is thy Father, thou art an heir of God, a joint heir of Christ, and God as the best of fathers, shall give thee health and all thou needest.' "

The many wonderful cures witnessed by the Swiss visitors under Vignes' roof, were the following: chronic rheumatism, Bright's disease, brain and spinal diseases, epilepsy, paralysis, lupus, dumbness, long-standing deafness and blindness, cataract of the eyes, tumors, insomnia, lameness and different kinds of nervous troubles.

His methods of healing were varied. Generally, it was a command, "Go, you are healed."

Sometimes the cure came surprisingly to the patient as a thing that was done: "You are healed."

Occasionally he would use such formulas, "In the name of Jesus Christ, I say to you that you shall obtain full recovery." Or, "in the name of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ, I say to you that you are cured."

"Though he lay no hands upon me, yet I felt, as he spoke, some kind of invisible force pass through my body," said a young girl who had the left arm shorter and much feebler than the right and who was crippled in one leg.

And when one present asked Vignes on what promises we must rely to do cures, he simply quoted the general promise of the Lord Jesus, "What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." Mark XI. v. 24.

Commenting on the promise of our Lord, "Ask and ye shall receive," he said, "God does not lie nor does he deceive us as we deceive Him."

Then he demonstrated the power of the *Word of God* in that He fulfils what He promises. Then to a girl present, dumb for many years, he asked her: "What is your name?" "Emma," she replied. "How old are you?" "Seventeen." "Where do you hail from?" "From X."

"You see," said Vignes to Mr. S., "This girl is cured, for she now speaks."

Sometimes, healing at a distance, he would say, "See what time it is and you shall know that it was at such an hour that So and So was healed."

To an epileptic he said, "Come forward! You have a disease which no physician can cure, but you are healed in the name of *Him* whom I proclaim unto you. Give up all liquors and strong drinks, tobacco and everything that poisons this generation."

M. Vignes frequently turned attention from himself to God, the true Healer, and tried to reveal to people that it was because of their failure to establish right relationship with God that they failed in their healing.

To a gentleman from Berne, who wished to consult him about other patients in Berne he said: "I hope you have arrived at the conclusion that there is a living God. Have you no God at Berne? Place yourself before Him; dwell in Him; Trust in Him. And now, return home. Ask Him what you will and you will see that He will grant it."

This beautiful self-effacement is brought forth in a final note by the editor of the brochure. He did not wish people to flock to him. His desire was to reveal to them the sense of God's love and power which he had found. This note is as follows:

"These reports have been published not for the purpose of encouraging people to go to Vialas or to write to M. Vignes, but simply to arouse and strengthen trust in God."

When the editor was last at Vialas, M. Vignes said to him:

"Tell them to write neither to me nor to you. Let them go to God. Let them give themselves to Him without fear and without reserve. They will receive from Him what is necessary for them."

Completing his special report, Mr. Perrin of Berne, wrote: "What seems to me important in the manifestation of M. Vignes for the present time is:

"1. That it is unique in its kind.

"2. That it proves beyond doubt that the promises of God are true.

"3. That the promises of God are realized even where there is no great learning nor particular gifts, and where the gift of self to God and faith are the only conditions.

"4. Finally, that if the gifts of the Holy Spirit which characterize the apostolic times are no more to be found, the cause must be sought in the lack of faith and consecration."

THE QUESTION

By Roger Noble Burnham

Though we have mastered earth and sea and sky,
And probed the hidden mysteries of life,
What shall our vaunted science profit us
If it but leads to bitterness and strife?
Where shall we find a hope to conquer fear,
A strength to overcome the power of hate,
And bring the gift of love and brotherhood
To this, our troubled world, before too late?

Giving up all other ways, come unto Me for refuge. I shall free thee from all sins—grieve not! —*Bhagavad-Gita*

FROM A DISCIPLE'S NOTE-BOOK

(Continued from the Winter Issue)

Following the entry on July 31st, 1920, concerning the death of Holy Mother, there are great gaps in the Note-book. It was not that the Swami ceased to pour out his wisdom in spontaneous and beautiful words or that the disciple ceased to respond to these outpourings. The reverse is true. It was indeed the very fact of her deep absorption in the Swami's message that led her to abandon her self-appointed task in order that she might give herself wholly to the spirit of his utterance, undistracted by the necessity of remembering the exact words and phrases.

Now that the voice that spoke those blessed words is still, the disciple deeply regrets her decision, for though it gave her greater freedom then, it makes her infinitely poorer now, and through her, impoverishes others. For the past slips farther and farther into illimitable distances, and memory gropes, often in vain, for what was once vivid and immediate.

The next two entries in the Note-book consist of brief sentences. Thus on an evening in May, 1921, there is written: "Love is all; love is all; love is all!" — an embodiment of the Swami's creed, — if he could be said to have a creed,— "Love conquers everything!" and on November 17th, 1921, there is this promise, an adaptation of a poem, I think by Rudyard Kipling: "Over the world and under the world, always I'll be right with you." It recalls to the disciple an afternoon and the Swami's voice as he said, (in relation to all those who were giving their lives for the fulfilling of his dream), "Whenever you need me and call upon me, no matter how far away I may be, I will come to you."

April 13th, 1922, has an important entry:

"Today our Swami received news of the death of Swami

Brahmanandaji, or "Maharaj", as he was known to the devotees, the first President of the Ramakrishna Mission and one of Sri Ramakrishna's great disciples. This must have occurred on Tuesday, the 11th, the day Swami passed through great mental suffering, apparently without any outer cause.

"On the night that he received these tidings the Swami talked to us, but the words were not recorded; only his statement that he felt that the work he had been called upon to do was entering a new phase or era."

Some weeks later there is a longer entry with a question mark over the date:

"Tonight Swami said: 'The disciple never asks anything of his Master—lessons or anything else. He places himself in his Master's hands and asks to be taught. After that, he demands nothing more, but just goes on and does what is given to him to do. It is to the one who demands nothing that the greatest blessings come.

" 'We must be happy. Unhappiness is a barrier. In India it is considered unclean. There people mourning over the death of a relative are not allowed to touch holy things. That is an extreme instance, but any cloud causes impurities to rise. There is even a peculiar odor to the body. Grief brings out the impurities.

" 'Divine Mother wants us to be happy. We are not Her servants; we are Her children. When we allow unhappiness or depression to enter us, we act as though She were not sufficient for our joy. We are Her children and we should be blissful. Why, I am ready to stand and vouch for each one of you before the Great Throne. I have such trust in you. You are all earnest and faithful.' "

Later was added this note:

" 'It is not what we get out of life but what we give to life that constitutes the spiritual existence — what we give

through sacrifice and endurance!' " — a magic formula for human fulfillment, which we too often brush to one side or accept as one accepts a line of poetry, as a sort of decoration for life, but not as a directive for living.

At this point of the Note-book there follows a summing-up of the main events which occurred during the long period of omission. It is an apology which the disciple pens to herself. It reads:

"There is a deep pain at my heart as I realize that through pressure of duties, and many times through laziness, as well as through a certain absorption in the task of inward living, I have for many, many months failed to record the blessed words and actions of our Master, as well as the varied activities of the community.

"First I must mention the year's illness, here under our roof, of Mrs. Glenn, Sister Devamata's mother, followed by her death, which took place one day at the home of her other daughter, where she had gone to spend a few hours.

"This gentle old lady had fallen and broken her hip during her visit to the Centre, and after many months of suffering and helplessness was just beginning to walk again when her end came. She was kind and enduring, and there was no one who did not feel it a privilege to serve her.

"Then—most important to the Centre's staff of workers, which really included everybody — was the addition of a wing and an upper story to the Queensberry Street house. This entailed a thousand and one complications, caused chiefly by a dishonest contractor. The strain upon all was terrific, for the work lasted from July to the middle of the next February, and during that time there was never one night that the three long flights of stairs, front and back, did not have to be swept clean of debris in the form of lime-dust and shavings and blocks of wood and great lumps of plaster, and the whole house more or less gone over.

"Sister Devamata was everywhere from garret to cellar, climbing ladders, directing workmen, and generally wearing herself out. It was all like a major examination from the hand of the Great Mother — a test in endurance, balance, and cheerfulness that we were called upon to take.

"In March the Swami went on a tour through the Middle West, speaking chiefly for the Applied Psychology groups which at that time were as thick as dandelions on a summer lawn and were attracting large numbers of people. This was the last of several such trips which brought new friends into the work, but involved too much rush and strain to please the Swami.

"On his return from these short journeys he always had interesting and amusing things to tell, and we would sit around him, all ears, as he described this contact or that experience.

"The chairman of a big meeting in Cleveland, at the very start, had introduced him as the 'Great Concentrator'—which amused him hugely, and gave decided point to another incident which occurred late one night on the road between two big cities. In spite of deep snow and severe cold, his host, with one or two other friends, had volunteered to motor him over the intervening distance, in order that he might catch a train and keep his lecture engagements. An unfortunate turn of the wheel, however, landed the car in a ditch from which it seemed impossible to dislodge it. Caught in this unfortunate predicament, the little group of shivering passengers was feeling anything but cheerful; but the host, a true devotee and a born optimist, turned upon them a beaming smile and said: 'Everything is going to be all right: Swami will concentrate.'

"For the benefit of posterity I must add that rescue did come, in the shape, I think, of another car, and the Swami made his train connection.

"The final lecture tour of the Swami's, which I have mentioned, was towards the Middle South, but before it was half completed, he was called back to Boston by the utter collapse and seemingly fatal illness of Sister Devamata, an illness which took her down to the doors of death and, as some thought, even beyond — the soul really gone, with only the shell left, able to speak, but in other respects like a corpse which was kept breathing by the mighty soul of her Master, who stood, so it seemed to us, between her and the King of Death, Lord Yama.

"The doctors gave her up. The nurses believed that she was as good as gone; all hope seemed extinguished; and then Swami declared a vigil before the Shrine.

"For three days and three nights special vigil lights were kept burning there, and there was always someone on guard, in prayer, with the Swami coming and going.

"The vigil began on the night of Monday, May 8th, and closed on Thursday night, May 11th. After that, there were nine days more of vigil, during which the Shrine doors were not opened except at Services, and there was no set watch. The special vigil lamps were kept burning, however; the Swami was there often, both night and day; and the members of the household came when their duties allowed.

"When the three-day vigil was ended, Swami summoned us into the chapel and spoke to us. He said:

" '*Let us, all together, pray to God from the depths of our heart — and it will come true—*

That He may remove all our darkness, delusion, and shadows;

That He may guide our steps,

And that His will may be manifested through us, and His glory shine forth.'

"Then he sang, and asked us to sing with him, a song that

had just come to his mind, the music of which was his own:

" 'Oh, what wonder is this? Oh, what wonder is this?
Highest One, holiest One!
Thou art the refuge of Thy children, of the wise
and the pure-hearted!
Glory to God! Glory to God!'

"He sang this song softly and constantly to himself after the vigil.

"It was following the first watch on the opening night of the vigil that the Swami, after returning to his own room, had some tremendous experience. About this I am not able to write, but it seemed to be connected with Sister Devamata's illness.

"The following morning she was like one born again. When the nurse came into the room she found her sitting on a chair, having walked there on her own initiative. The shadow of death had lifted, though it still hung low. The crisis had passed. The doctors admit that they had nothing to do with this; the nurse says that she never witnessed anything like it, and that she believes only because she saw it happen.

"Thursday night, May 18th, the Swami called us in to the chapel immediately after the Class, and gave to each of us one of the vigil lights which had been used in the Shrine during the vigil. Then he sat on the altar platform and asked us if we realized what had happened there.

" 'A miracle!' said Sister Satya Prana.

" 'Devotees should be able to do these things,' Swami replied. 'Not that any person does them,' he added, 'but we can always make ourselves pure channels.' That, he said, was why we should always try to keep our spiritual ideals before us every minute. 'Lack of impatience and anger, of envy, jealousy and hatred—lack of these is what makes the spiritual life. Just theories do not help.

" 'We must ever keep vigil. That is the real meaning of the vigil lights. Night and day we must keep vigil in our hearts, must keep the light burning. When this world sleeps, we must lie awake. Even among those who stay awake some do not see. To keep vigil means to be on guard; then thieves cannot break in and steal, nor will they come when we keep the light burning.

" 'We do all this through devotion. We cannot do it through our own will. He who thinks he can accomplish this through petty, personal will is mistaken. It can be done only by utter and absolute surrender. "Do with me what You will: cast me off or draw me to You according to Your will." The world may not understand, but we must look not to the world, but to God.'

"Then Swami asked us all to say a prayer from our hearts that Sister would have a good night's rest.

"Those who have been in the house these past months, and only those, know the patience, the power, the radiancy of our Swami. He has given Sister practically every breath that she has drawn; he has supported her dead weight; he has stood between doctors and nurses and patient; he has smoothed every path, has lightened every difficulty and, in addition, has carried on the public work, done the entire editing of the magazine, and has been the light and life of the household.

"I write what I have seen. There are many souls, it is true, who carry tremendous burdens and at the same time manifest great efficiency in other directions. That is not unusual. What distinguishes the Swami is the lightness, the almost playful spirit with which he has borne his load. He has never given the impression that he is doing anything, and he always has time to meet the individual need. This requires something more than strength and efficiency. It is that plus

the divine element, which covers everything with grace. We are all convinced that without his presence Sister could not have lived. Sustained by his hand, she is struggling towards recovery very little by very little, but the strain on him is never-ending.

"When he was still plunged in the chaos of these days came the news of the passing of Swami Brahmanandaji. This indeed seemed almost to break his heart, for there was tremendous love there for that mighty spiritual son of Sri Ramakrishna. It was as if Swami felt that an unfailing Friend had gone, leaving him greatly alone.

"I have heard of sacred grief, but I never witnessed it till I saw this divine child (for so he did seem to us) with the tears flowing down his cheeks as he spoke to us of this loss and its significance. The next day his grief was poured forth in a most wonderful Good Friday address, afterwards published under the title of 'Glorifying Pain and Adversity.'

"The same afternoon that the news came to him, he called me to his study and I had the privilege of sitting quietly at one side while he poured out many exalting thoughts, occasioned by his sorrow. I remember his saying with deep pathos: 'It seems that the best are all taken and only the least are left behind.'

Culminating this series of events, and their crowning glory, came the poems, which the Swami took humbly as a gift and blessing from the Divine Mother, and which gave to those around him a pure glimpse of his inward life.

"It was while he was standing at his window watching people arrive for a Thursday night Class that the first one was conceived, the one that he called 'Unasked Giver' but which we now know as 'Unceasing Giver'—the opening poem in 'Soul's Secret Door.'

"The following morning he called me in to hear what he

had written. 'What do you think it is?' he asked me; 'Is it poetry?' I replied that it was very lovely poetry. He said that he had wanted to read it to me the night before, but it was too late, so he had waited. He seemed to be athrill with it, as indeed was I. He had written it down quickly, he said, but it needed hardly a correction. I remember he spoke with appreciation of the line: 'No merit have we save our faith in Thine infinite compassion.'

"A new era truly had begun—the era of the poems.

" 'Sanctity,' 'Silence,' and 'Fire of Divine Love,' now called 'Unquenchable Flame,' followed in quick succession. He used to read them to us as they came and comment on them. If only I had written down each day the things that he said and felt concerning them, those who read them now would be the richer for it.

" 'Silence' was a dialogue between 'restive mind' and the soul. The restive mind must be still so as not to rob the soul of its new happiness. Then the mind enters into the presence of Silence and the soul breathes: 'How sweet is the sound of silence; how tender is its touch; how fragrant is its breathing; how lovely is its form!'

" 'Unquenchable Flame' Swami loved. It was the first poem he could remember after writing it down. Sister Devamata, to whose bedside he went with each new outpouring, did not take to it at first, but afterwards learned to like it. 'Unlighted Lamp' had a peculiarly frightening effect upon her, perhaps because of her illness, and for a long time she did not wish to hear it read. There seemed to be nothing in it for her to grasp and hold to; it carried the mind too far beyond form.

"The first four poems Swami always called the 'Big Four'. Sometimes as many as five or six poems would come in a day. During the Shrine Service one night we almost saw the

living Presence through him; he was so on fire with his inner vision that every movement revealed his rapture. It was the 'Dedication' which came to birth that way. Swami does not like to read that poem often; it is too close to him, too intimate a revelation of his innermost heart. He used it as the dedication in 'Soul's Secret Door,' and his whole relationship to his new gift is laid bare therein.

"On another evening, when he was swept by his poems, he came upstairs trembling all over. It seemed as if the body were too frail to hold his spirit, which was being lifted away and away on the wings of the songs.

"A certain Mr. D—— with his lovely wife and her pretty sister——has been coming to the Centre since the first of the year. We all of us think that it was Mr. D—— who called forth the poem, 'Brother, Thy Load Is Heavy.' Certainly Mr. D——wanted to hear it again and again, and as he has been passing through a severe financial crisis, it may well be that Swami wrote the poem for his benefit.

"Often the poems come at inopportune times, and then the Swami can hardly wait for the opportunity to write them down. Some have been lost because he had to wait too long.

"The poem he called his 'Fourth of July Firecracker' popped into his head and heart one Fourth of July, while he was sitting at the wheel of his car, down in the Italian quarter while Sister Seva was in a store doing the marketing. Suddenly as he waited poetic lines rose to the surface of his consciousness, but, alas, he had no paper on which to transcribe them. At that crucial moment a little boy tossed a hand-bill onto his lap through the car window. The day was saved and 'Thy Captive' was saved along with it for future readers.

"Lester F——, an old member of the community, came

back to the Centre this spring. Lately he has been replanting the front lawn and has clamored for tested grass seed. The Swami, not realizing that untested seed means mixed seed, not merely dead seed, purchased some of it for him. When it came up it developed a lot of witch grass, much to Lester's disgust. Shortly after this catastrophe, Sister Achala called to me and handed me a verse that Swami had just written. It ran as follows:

'In Life's vegetable garden
I planted some untested seed;
It grew full of witch grass
And killed my coveted reed.
It's full of shackles and backles;
It's full of rackles and tackles!
It's full, full, full!'

"It must have been that evening that the D——s came in for a visit. Of course they were eager to hear the latest poems. So the Swami brought forth his little note-book and everyone sat around, prepared to be uplifted. With great seriousness the Swami began: 'In Life's vegetable garden I planted some untested seed.' A puzzled expression began to creep over the faces of the listeners. Mr. D——'s face grew red. The Swami, however, continued with full sonorous tones: 'It grew full of witch grass and killed my coveted reed.' Mr. D——'s face grew redder and redder. Apparently he was not sure whether to laugh or to be solemn; but the laughter itself decided the issue and came bursting forth with a loud explosion which set everybody off.

"This jingle has become a real classic, and perhaps only the Swami appreciates its deeper meaning, since we poor shackles and backles can hardly be expected to do so. He sings it now to a catchy tune out of his own head, and we sing it with him, one or two of the household coming in with rich altos.

"Since the new top story is finished, we sit there almost every evening in what we call the 'Sun-parlor' and listen to the poems, or else we talk, or Swami sings a beautiful sacred song of India, to lift our minds and hearts before we go to bed."

TO BE CONTINUED

REPORT

THE VEDANTA CENTRE, BOSTON, MASS.

The memory of the New Year's Eve Service characterized by silence and prayerfulness still lingers as a reminder of how the faithful should live each day of 1949. For the Vedanta Centre it is neither dull nor without action. The devoted group that meets at 420 Beacon Street to gather impetus from the Sunday Services and the Tuesday Class is frequently encouraged by the inflow of interest coming from those who having discovered the place repeat their visit. The Thursday evening meditation inaugurated in January has been a source of great rest and spiritual refreshment. It is attended by only a selective minority.

The first banquet of the year was in honor of the Centre's Fortieth Anniversary. It was held on January 21st, which also marked the birthday of Swami Vivekananda. A steady snowfall lasting from early morning until night could not prevail against the eager one-hundred persons who came to show their appreciation to the Centre and to partake of its hospitality. Gayatri Devi prepared an Indian dinner after which there was music of the East and the West and fitting tributes paid by Mr. William Ennis, Mr. Clifford Ross and Mr. Raphael Boruchoff.

During the month, Srimati Gayatri Devi spoke for a group of professional and business women belonging to Boston's historical Trinity Church. The meeting, informal

in nature, was held in the pastor's rectory and the topic was "Hinduism." Afterwards Gayatri Devi answered questions for nearly an hour. This contact created such an interest in India's religious philosophy that a large number of the women paid a visit to the Centre on the following week.

Sunday the 23rd was dedicated to Swami Vivekananda, commemorating his birthday anniversary. Both the Services were well attended. Gayatri Devi spoke on "The Man of Vision" in the morning and on "His Noble Mission" at eight o'clock, making the Great Swami's personality vivid to her listeners.

On January 28th, in spite of inclement weather causing delay and minor difficulty, Gayatri Devi arrived safely at Ananda Ashrama, La Crescenta, California, after a fourteen hours' trip by air. This, her first continental flight was quite perfect, increasing her enthusiasm for air travel. The Ananda Ashrama and its many friends gave Gayatri Devi a warm welcome.

On February 1st, Sister Daya left the Ashrama for the Boston Centre, arriving on Saturday the 5th.

On Tuesday evening, February 15th, following the regular Tuesday night Class, a reception was held in honor of Swami Paramananda, whose birth date this was, and to whom Sister Daya paid glowing tribute at the close of the Class. It was heart-warming to speak of the Swami in the city in which he began his ministry and which has always been so vitally connected with his work. The group in Boston is so devoted and unified that they invite a free expression of the thoughts which have their rise in the heart, as well as in the mind.

On Sunday March 6th, Sri Ramakrishna's birthday closed the garland of anniversaries, as it were, when special

Services dedicated to his mighty memory were held at the Centre. Over this beautiful, fragrant home of living Spirit, his universal Spirit seemed to brood with tender blessing and wide-reaching love.

ANANDA ASHRAMA, LA CRESCENTA, CALIFORNIA

This year, following the pattern of the year before, Srimati Gayatri Devi, like a migratory bird, flew westward to the Ananda Ashrama, La Crescenta, only this time she actually flew and unlike the migrating bird did not arrive on the same date as before, but on January 28th, a month or so later. Two days following this, Sister Daya took train for the Vedanta Centre, Boston.

Prior to this exchange, California had been plagued with extreme cold which kept on week after week, bringing discomfort to the Californians and blighting death to many lovely trees and plants. An unbelievable snow storm swept in around the middle of January, causing the Ashrama gardens to appear like a scene in the Himalayas. The Swami's statue in the Temple patio bore a snowy turban a foot high, a garland of snow heavier than the garlands of flowers with which friends used to welcome him in India hung about his neck, while at one side an orange tree, in full fruit, showed gleaming globes of gold upon its robe of white. Nine inches of snow fell, or thereabouts, and stood out in dazzling beauty against a sky that, cleared of clouds, was almost burningly blue. But the sun did not carry its usual warmth and it was days before this white covering entirely melted away.

Before all this occurred, Ashrama had observed the regular rhythm of the passing year: Christmastide with the traditional Christmas Eve Service, and New Year's with the Watch Service in the Temple on New Year's Eve. On both these occasions the Temple glowed with inner and

outer beauty—with a comingling of flowers, lights and prayers, and the fragrant greens of the Christmas season.

A series of three talks on "Some Phases of Hindu Philosophy," given by Sister Daya at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Theron Winston, on the evenings of November 28th, December 26th and January 23rd, proved, as a similar series did last year, to be a most happy experience. The warm hospitality at the Winston home and the eager response of the group assembled there drew from the speaker the best that lay in her heart to give.

On Sunday, January 23rd, the Ashrama celebrated the birthday anniversary of Great Swamiji (Swami Vivekananda), Sister Daya speaking at both Services on the heroic life and spirit of this great master, whose living presence seemed to animate the Temple and the hearts of those present.

During Gayatri Devi's visit the two outstanding events of the season were the observances of Swami Paramananda's birthday on February 13th and Sri Ramakrishna's Birthday Anniversary on Sunday, March 6th. Innumerable cars climbed the hill on both occasions,—alive with enthusiasm and interest. The Temple was the centre of major activities sharing with its worshippers the blessing of the living Presence which only the most insensate would fail to feel.

Ananda Ashrama like a magnet continues to attract increasing number of Truth seekers. Each Sunday the Temple is practically full and even in undesirable weather (which has been frequent this winter) interest in the Services and the Thursday Class is undiminished.

Gayatri Devi and Sister Daya will return to their respective posts right after Easter.

An interesting acquisition by the Ananda Ashrama is the wire-recorder which is being used in connection with the

public Services. Often people ask Gayatri Devi or Sister Daya for a copy of some special lecture. Unfortunately, as both speakers speak quite spontaneously it has been impossible to meet this demand. Now that is all changed.

It came about through two friends—the proud possessors of recording machines—who asked permission to record the Sunday morning Services. The experiment proved successful and it was decided to provide the Ashrama with a machine of its own. At the same time, a small manifolding machine was obtained, by means of which any number of reproductions can be made of a single talk, without too much labor being involved. Miss Shearwood Stubbington, a resident member of the Ashrama from England, has taken over this new department and is now producing attractive little brochures, under the general title of "Temple Talks." These are bound in an artistic paper cover and it is hoped that soon each Sunday the Address given the previous Sunday will be available to the public. These small booklets sell for fifty cents apiece and already four different lectures are obtainable: by Gayatri Devi—"Our Destiny"; by Sister Daya—"Invulnerable Spirit," "Success and Failure," and "Vedanta and Human Relationships."

Those who desire to purchase the wire spool itself for the sake of hearing the actual voice, may do so for the price of the spool, $5.00, plus a small profit to cover labor and postage. To hear the recording, however, would require the possession of a wire-recording machine. It could be arranged to send disc recordings made from the wire recording, and these may be played on any ordinary type victrola. But this would be a more difficult and expensive process.

These pamphlets can be obtained either from the Ananda Ashrama, Box 577, La Crescenta, California, or from the Vedanta Centre, 420 Beacon St., Boston 15, Mass.